

## **AB 1697 (Pavley) FACT SHEET**

### **Clean Air for Child Care**

### **AS INTRODUCED 2/22/05**

#### **Purpose:**

To protect children at child care centers from being exposed to dangerous levels of air pollution, by making sure new facilities are located a safe distance from freeways and industrial sites.

#### **Problem:**

Children, particularly infants and toddlers, are the most vulnerable to the health impacts of air pollution, in part because their lungs are still developing and their airways are narrower than those of adults, and because they often play outdoors during the day thus having a greater exposure. Scores of studies have shown direct links between the proximity of a child's home or school to high traffic corridors and severe respiratory impacts. Many studies have also documented significant increases in the levels of pollutants, particularly diesel particulates (PM), in close proximity to freeways and busy roadways. A recent study in Los Angeles measured PM levels up to 25 times higher near freeways than background levels measured 1,000 feet away.

The Children's Health Study in Southern California has shown strong evidence of severe health impacts to growing children exposed to excessive pollution from traffic. Higher levels of asthma have been documented in children living closest to busy roads. The study has also found a strong correlation between traffic related pollutants and diminished lung function in children, similar in scale to the impacts related to maternal smoking. In fact, new evidence indicates that over exposure to diesel pollution may affect lung function and even cause asthma in previously healthy children.

Today no restrictions exist on how close a child day care facility can be to dangerous sources of air pollution. However, guidance measures are emerging from regulatory agencies to alert land use planners to the risks caused by some of these pollution sources.

For example, a draft South Coast Air Quality Management District guidance document cautions planners to avoid placing sensitive land uses, including childcare centers, within 1,000 feet of roadways with heavy diesel truck traffic, without a thorough investigation of potential health

impacts. The California Air Resources Board has developed similar draft guidance to prevent day care centers, schools and other sensitive land uses from being too close to significant pollution sources like freeways.

#### **What this Bill would do:**

AB 1697 would prevent new child care facilities from being located too close to significant pollution sources. These facilities would not be able to obtain a license from the state if they are within 1,000 feet of a highway, freeway or industrial site. Existing child care centers and small new "home" daycares would not be affected.

#### **Existing Law:**

##### **SB 25 (Escutia, Chapter 731, Statutes of 1999) - Children's Environmental Health Protection**

- Requires the Southcoast Air Quality Management District to inform schools and day care centers when any federal primary ambient air quality standard is predicted to be exceeded.
- Expands the state air monitoring system in six communities around the state to include special monitoring of children's exposure to air pollutants and toxic contaminants. Requires air pollution monitors near schools, day care centers and outdoor recreational facilities that are in close proximity or downwind from sources or air pollutants including freeways and major traffic areas.

##### **SB 352 (Escutia, Chapter 668, Statutes of 2003) - Smog Free Schools Bill**

- Prevents new schools from being built within 500 feet of a freeway or busy roadway, unless a district can prove through rigorous health risk analysis that the site is safe; and
- Requires that risk assessments of potential new school sites include significant pollution sources (in addition to previously required industrial facilities), such as freeways, agricultural operations, and rail yards, within one-quarter mile of a proposed site.

#### **Comments:**

This bill is essential to protecting future generations of Californians from asthma and other air pollution related health impacts.

Nearly 1.2 million children in California suffer from asthma, which costs the state \$480 million in hospital stays alone. In some parts of the state, asthma rates have reached truly epidemic proportions, affecting one in five children. Asthma accounts for more school absences than any other chronic illness. Poor families shoulder a disproportionate impact from asthma, setting those children behind in school and hindering their success later in life. It is imperative that we make every effort to protect children from the environmental factors, such as pollution, that play a major role in this debilitating disease.

**Support:**

Bay Area Clean Air Task Force  
Community Action to Fight Asthma (CAFA)  
Environment California  
Natural Resources Defense Council (**Sponsor**)  
Sierra Club California  
South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD)  
Union of Concerned Scientists

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**Bill Status**

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